

Resolution SA24.03

RESOLUTION TO BECOME A RECONCILING IN CHRIST SYNOD

In 2009, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly approved Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust which addressed the question: How do we understand human sexuality, “a wondrous gift,” within the context of Jesus’ invitation to love God and love our neighbor? And while the statement at that time recognized that this church “holds various convictions regarding lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships, this church is united on many critical issues . . . to welcome, care for, and support same-gender couples and their families and to advocate for their legal protection.”

Since then, the ELCA has grown and continues to welcome and affirm of LGBTQIA+ equality in the church. LGBTQIA+ pastors and deacons have been called and ordained for ministry. Many of our lifelong members have had their marriage vows affirmed in their local churches. We have called LGBTQIA+ rostered ministers to serve as bishops and more than half of the 65 Synods of the ELCA have become Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Synods.

In the Central States Synod, our mission statement declares that we are “united with Christ in baptism, traveling the way of Jesus, joining God’s reign of justice and radical love for the world.” We are becoming a more diverse community of faith through the movement of our congregations and faith leaders. We have 18 congregations and 3 campus ministries have been designated or are going through the process of becoming Reconciling in Christ (RIC). And both of our seminary partners, LSTC and Wartburg, have joined as RIC communities.

Despite this progress, our LGBTQIA+ siblings continue to experience exclusion and harm from people who believe they are acting in the name of Christianity. Many churches who declare “All are welcome” often demonstrate to LGBTQIA+ individuals and families that “All” does not include them.

Since 1983, the RIC program has been a public way for faith communities to see, name, celebrate, and advocate for people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions in the Lutheran church. Its purpose is to ensure the welcome, inclusion, celebration, and advocacy for people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions; and to work for racial equity and commit to anti-racist work and support the national program. The welcoming invitation of RIC is explicit, recognizing the injustices that have occurred in the name of faith.

Central States Synod 2024 Synod Assembly

June 6-8, 2024

The Central States Synod, stepping into its role as a RIC synod, would continue to travel the way of Jesus, welcoming, including, and celebrating all sexual orientations, gender identities, racial, ethnic, and indigenous backgrounds. We would work toward the full welcome, inclusion, celebration, and advocacy of all. While not mandating any particular action by individual congregations, the Central States Synod will continue to:

- Provide resources relevant to welcoming LGBTQIA+ individuals and their families on the synod's website.
- Emphasize the synod's commitment to welcome all at synod and conference events.
- Promote annual "RIC Sunday" worship services and celebrations in the synod newsletter and other media.
- Advocate (together with the bishop and other synod leaders) for public policies that protect LGBTQIA + individuals and their families.
- Make a meaningful financial contribution to support the national RIC program in an amount determined by the synod council.
- Continue our work for racial justice in partnership with the Synod's Racial Justice Team.
- Encourage individual congregations, when requested, to develop their own welcome statements, recognizing and respecting the importance of each congregation to discern its way to live out Christ's welcome.

While the RIC program is focused on the welcome and inclusion of LGBTQIA+ and working for racial justice, the Central States Synod recognizes that the gospel of Jesus and the welcome of the church extends to all people. It does not draw a distinction based upon racial, ethnic or indigenous background; age; political affiliations; economic or social status; or mental or physical ability. This calls us to be intentional about the ways we extend Christ's welcome to ALL.

Be it resolved that the Central States Synod in assembly become a Reconciling in Christ Synod.

Be it further resolved that the Central States Synod adopt the following statement of welcome: Traveling the way of Jesus, who commanded his followers to love one another as Christ has loved, and believing that all persons are created in the image of God, this synod welcomes people of every race, background, age, political affiliation, economic and social status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and mental and physical ability. As a synod we strive to enable all people to participate fully in the life and work of the church in the ministry of Jesus Christ.

Submitted by the Central States Synod Council